

HOOKEDNOW

A NEWSLETTER FOR FLY FISHERS
BY

DAVE SKIP RICK
HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

THANK YOU FOR SUBSCRIBING TO *HOOKEDNOW*. This is the first issue just for paid subscribers. Our goal each issue is to entertain and educate fly fishers with a combination of text, photos and video. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or comments at: sweltsa@frontier.com (please include "Hooked Newsletter" in the subject line for quicker replies). We also hope you will tell your fishing buddies about Hooked.

In this issue we discuss what we consider to be key late winter/early spring hatches. Specifically, Dave covers *Skwala* stoneflies, also known as brown willow flies. Skip discusses his favorite ways to fish and imitate late winter midge hatches on streams. And Rick describes how to match and fish one of his favorite, but often unnoticed, early season caddis hatches, the little saddle-case caddis.



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DAVE HUGHES - HOOKED ON SKWALA



Skwala stoneflies are among those rare aquatic insects so little known, or its importance so recently noticed, that it goes by its Latin genus name rather than a raft of confusing common names...though perhaps in some regions the term *brown willow fly* applies to it rather than to the more likely suspect, a variation of the slightly larger and much more common golden stone. Two species of this early-season stonefly, *Skwala cuvata* and *S. americana*, are distributed in waters from the Rockies to the Pacific coast. They are so similar that you'll find no need to tell them apart, fortunately, because I'd be unable to do it myself.

They're also hard to distinguish, in the nymph stage, from the much more widespread golden stoneflies. They're just a bit smaller when mature, size 8 and 10 on long shank hooks, rather than size 6, more slender, and lighter in color. Perhaps this similarity is beneficial to the angler. The same fly patterns that you fish for the larger nymphs, downsized a bit, will work as well for the smaller Skwala. That is not true for the more important adult stage.

Skwala populations are distributed broadly throughout the west, but they're more often sparse than abundant. They're also somewhat cryptic in the adult stage, hiding deep in streamside grasses rather than clambering about like the bigger, and therefore more visible, golden stones that hatch later in spring/early summer. Skwala seldom arrive on the water in bunches, in my own experience, and are at times so

sparse that they could be called scant. But they hatch early in the season, when trout are hungry, and they are large insects compared to the more common fare at that time of year--the midges and *Glossosoma* caddis that Skip and Rick are covering as more important to them - and of course, the blue-winged olive mayflies that are so important to all of us in the first months of the year.

My admonition here is to watch carefully for Skwala adults, even if they're only occasional. If they're around at all, trout will be aware of it, and they'll know what to do about it. You should, too. The trout that work on them are very often large.

Skwala nymphs are elongated, slender, have little taper from front to back. They have two antennae, two tails, and vermiculated patterning on their heads and thoracic segments. All of these things could be said about golden stone nymphs, as well. You'll often collect them in the same sort of water, usually riffles or rocky runs. If you're intent on separating one from another, then turn the insect over; the Skwala lacks the dominant bushy gills that you'll find on the thorax of the golden stone, looking almost like white armpit hair.

Skwala are distributed in all sorts of western waters, but I've found them most common in small to medium-sized tailwaters. That finding is likely related to my preference to fish those kinds of waters in February and March, when dams tame flows, and also tend to clarify the water, making conditions more acceptable for fishing than they often are on freestone streams at the same time of year. Most of my own fishing over Skwala has been on the Crooked River in Oregon, the Yakima River in Washington, the South Fork of the Boise River in Idaho, and the famous Owyhee River, on the border between Oregon and Idaho. But it would be foolish to overlook the hatch on Chuck Stranahan's water on the Bitterroot River in Montana, where it might be most famous. You should get your information on that hatch, which is a bit later toward spring than it is farther to the west, from



Skwala nymph (Skwala americana) on the left and a Golden stone nymph (Calineuria californica) on the right. Both are active predators feeding on any small aquatic insect they can catch. Note bushy gills at base of the legs of the Golden stone. Skwala nymphs have no such gills.

Chuck in his shop in Hamilton, right on the river. Obviously, he'll also have the fly patterns that best match it there.

Nymph patterns need not be specific to the Skwala, though you can find lots of folks who disagree with me, and you'll also find that each of them offers an excellent pattern. You can use downsized golden stone dressings, or up-sized standards such as the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear. I caught a bunch of trout on Skwala water once, fishing a large Copper John while I waited for the scant hatch to start, and for the trout to begin tipping their attention upward. I asked a couple of the larger, and supposedly smarter, trout why they had taken the Copper John. They complained about being hungry at that time of year, about the sparsity of other things to eat, and about the slight but sneaky resemblance between the brash nymph and the few natural Skwala they'd been able to hunt down. The truth is that you can fish the soft water near riffles and rocky runs with a Copper John or Bead-head Gold-

Ribbed Hare's Ear, and do quite well, but you'd also be very wise to drop a size 16 generic nymph off its stern, on about 10 or 12 inches of lighter tippet, in case trout down there take a look at the bigger Skwala nymph and decide they don't like it.

Whatever fly you fish for the nymph, and whether you rig it with a point fly or not, be sure to get it to the bottom, and fish it dead-drift. The naturals live in fairly fast water, among bottom stones, but they must make the migration to shore before they're able to emerge into adults. Trout line up and wait for them in the softer water inside those riffles and runs. You won't be able to see the trout, so once again repeating my refrain from the last HookedNow article, the critical skill you need to develop is recognition of the type of water where the natural insects live, and then the nearest somewhat soft water to the edges of it, where trout can hold along the bottom without fighting a strong and cold current.

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Dave fishing - and playing a fish - close to shore near the still bare willows of the Owyhee River in Oregon.

Use the indicator and split shot rig, with enough weight to get the nymph, or nymphs, to the bottom, and enough indicator to float with all that weight down there. Leave enough scope in the leader between the nymphs and the indicator so that the flies bounce on the bottom rather than dangle a foot or two above it. If there is a second secret beyond reading the water right to find the trout, it's rigging right to get the nymph, or brace of them, down to where the trout will be sure to notice them.



A warm afternoon in late winter is a beautiful time to be on the water, and a great time for Skwala adults to be running around. Don't look for them in the air. Adults rarely fly, so look for them along the bank in the willows and grass.

Fish them dead drift, painting parallel brushstrokes along the bottom with them, in what the great Gary Borger called the 'shotgun method' in his seminal but still excellent *Nymphing, a basic book*.

Skwala adults are less like golden stones than their earlier nymphal stage. They are concolorous, with a single shade of grayish-brown on the back and wings, though it's somewhat lighter on the underside. The females have two full sets of wings, in normal stonefly fashion, but the males are more often than not brachypterous: short-winged. Whether winged or not, it's not common to see Skwala adults in the air. They prefer to crawl in the grasses, and launch themselves onto the water by crawling rather than flying.

I've seen adult females hike out of streamside grass, sere and brown and dry at that time of year, as if they were early hominids emerging out of forests. I've also seen them tiptoe out on fallen grass stems, as if they were walking planks, then drop onto the water and begin long floats downstream.

Skwala show a couple of different behaviors when on the water. Mostly they just float amiably and peaceably along, letting the current take them where it will. This is almost always on long stretches of fairly



Female Skwala drifting on the water and enticing trout.

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Left: Female Skwala adult hanging out on some dry shoreline grass stems. Note the small Glossosoma caddis adult sharing the stem. Right: Male Skwala adult. See the short non-functional wings? This is not a genetic malfunction, and is typical of Skwala males. Females can fly, but rarely do so. The result: Fish dry flies close to the banks.

calm water. The second behavior seems to be a sudden panicked scramble to walk on the water, either out to where they want to deposit their eggs, or back to the safety of the shore from which they so recently departed.

I've already mentioned, to the point where you're about to turn your head aside at the cliché, that Skwala are more often scant than abundant. The first thing you need to do when you suspect they're around is search streamside grasses and watch the water very carefully for them. They'll appear one at a time; you'll need to notice them when they do. As soon as you spot one on the water, cease casting, get out your handy Nikon binoculars if you must, and follow its drift. Sometimes it will float ten feet and go down in a swirl. Other times it will float 100 or even 200 feet. But the almost inevitable end of a Skwala adult on trout water is a nose lofted out, and a quiet death. I've never seen it announced with any fanfare. If you're not watching, you'll never see it happen. That's why I recommend

you do more watching than casting when you're fishing water with trout of good size, and you've spotted any Skwala adults in the grasses or on the waters.

In my own interviews with trout, they've told me that so early in the season, fishing over such a large adult insect, exact imitation is less important than getting something the right size over the right spot. That said, it's a fun hatch for which to create your own dressing, and you're almost sure to be rewarded, because trout feeding on Skwala are almost sure to take it.

I've had success with Jim Schollmeyer's Foam Skwala dressing, with an Egg-laying Skwala with a hair wing, and also with a Deer Hair Caddis tied in a large enough size to imitate the natural.

Presentation should be a combination of dead-drift float with occasional hops and skitters and skates inserted, to imitate both the free float and panicked skating of the naturals. If you're covering a spotted

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nose, and the first couple of drifts fail to move the trout, add a skitter to your next presentation, to wake the trout up, let it know another meal is floating over its head. Most often, because the females launch themselves from shore and float parallel to it, trout will feed within five to ten feet of the bank, and you should focus your fishing there. But follow the drift of any natural you spot on the water. When a nose pokes out to take it, reel up, and move immediately into position to fish over that trout. Don't take your time to fish your way upstream or down to it; it might have moved by

the time you get there. If a trout marks itself, move to it instantly, and catch it as quickly as you can.

That is what Skwala fishing means to me, more than any other early fishing: spotting a natural on the water, following its drift, watching for a nose to poke out, moving instantly into position to take a shot at it. I'll confess it's a bit like hunting, though I personally don't like to confuse fishing with hunting...but the analogy can be allowed to continue: trout that feed on early Skwala are often such a size that they can be considered big game.



Hafele with a fat brown that inhaled a Skwala dry fly. Proof that fishing is easy when trout are on the hunt for Skwala.

Hafele comment: "I did not locate this brown through any unscrupulous use of a live adult!" See ethical dilemma below.

An Ethical Dilemma

I've mentioned that Skwala are often scant, that you can sometimes find one or two in streamside grasses, and that the best way to locate a trout is to follow the float of an adult Skwala on the water, watch for a big nose to poke out to take it. Now I ask you: If you were to find a Skwala adult crawling happily around in the grass, would it be ethical to capture it and throw it out onto water where you suspect there might be a big and hungry trout, in order to follow its float and thereby pinpoint the lie of that trout?

We both know what Rick and Skip would do, because they're both scoundrels. We might both have a suspicion about what I'd do, but neither of us are sure. I can't answer what you would do; I'm not even sure what you *should* do!

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SKWALA NYMPH

Hook: 3X long, size 10-12.
Head: Gold bead.
Weight: 10-15 turns non-lead wire.
Thread: Brown 3/0 or 6/0.
Tails: Ginger biots, forked.
Rib: Copper wire.
Body: Brown-amber dubbing.
Wing case: Mottled turkey feather section.
Thorax: Brown-amber dubbing.
Legs: Ginger hen hackle fibers.



BEADHEAD GOLD-RIBBED HARE'S EAR

Hook: Standard nymph, size 8-12.
Bead: Gold.
Weight: 12-15 turns non-lead wire.
Thread: Brown 6/0.
Tail: Hare's mask guard hairs.
Rib: Gold oval tinsel.
Body: Hare's mask fur.
Wing case: Dark turkey feather section.
Thorax: Hare's mask fur, with guard hairs.



COPPER JOHN (ORIGINATOR: JOHN BARR)

Hook: Standard nymph, size 10-12.
Bead: Gold.
Weight: 13 turns non-lead wire.
Thread: Black 6/0.
Tails: Brown biots, forked.
Body: Copper wire.
Wing case: Black Thin Skin, epoxied.
Thorax: Peacock herl.
Legs: Brown hen back fibers.



SKWALA EGG-LAYER

Hook: 2X or 3X long dry fly, size 10-12.
Thread: Brown 3/0 or 6/0.
Egg sac: Black foam.
Tails: Ginger biots, forked.
Rib: Working thread.
Body: Golden-amber dubbing.
Wing: Brown bucktail.
Hackle: Grizzly and ginger mixed, clipped in V-notch.



FOAM SKWALA (ORIGINATOR: JIM SCHOLLMAYER)

Hook: Short shank dry fly, size 10-12.
Thread: Tan 6/0.
Abdomen: Tan Larva Lace foam, extended.
Wing: Natural tan yearling elk hair.
Head: Tan Larva Lace foam, bullet style.



DEER HAIR CADDIS (JIM SCHOLLMAYER)

Hook: Standard dry fly, size 8-10.
Thread: Olive 6/0.
Hackle: Dark blue dun, palmered over body.
Body: BWO Superfine dubbing.
Wing: Gray-dyed yearling elk hair.



SKIP MORRIS & THE MIDGE, MY LATE-WINTER FAVORITE



I suppose I should confess right off--I don't really have a favorite late-winter hatch. I chose the midge because my experience with little winter stoneflies is thin, and because I've written enough about the somber but lovely little blue-winged olive mayfly that I'm due to tackle something else.

Besides, I've fished a lot of midge hatches. And almost always during the cold months of October through March. Give me low water and hatching midges and sipping trout and I'll forget about numb toes and stinging hands. (Well, I'll almost forget...)

If you don't know that midges are tiny, you don't know midges. They look like mosquitoes, speck-size mosquitoes. So they're easy to miss as they ride the surface of the river on their toes with their sliver-white wings down along their sides. Many are dark, and all but disappear on dark water. So you really have to look to find them. Get your head down close; watch the flat,

lazy flows. If midges are there, you may see many--midges like to hatch in mobs. That's what makes them, tiny as they are, appealing to trout.

Trout know better than to waste a spoonful of energy on a pinch of protein, so midge rises are quiet dimples on the water. That's one good clue that midges are being served. Still, close inspection of the surface is invaluable here.

So how small are flies that imitate midges? A big one is size 18, and size 22 is probably average, but that's just the start--there are hooks for midge-flies of size 24, 26, 28... At certain times in certain places, even these are insufficiently diminutive. Midges can get silly small. Once, among a few Colorado guides waiting for their clients, I plucked a midge off the edge of water where trout were feeding. I commented on how minuscule the insect was, and a guide who'd seen that hatch many times said, "Probably take a number 32 to match that...or smaller." He was right. Still, on rose the trout...

Hook-size runs differently for deep midge-flies than for surface ones in my experience. When a hatch is on and the trout are nosing down identical midge



Watch quiet water carefully - binocs can be a huge help - for tiny midge adults and the soft rises of feeding trout taking them.

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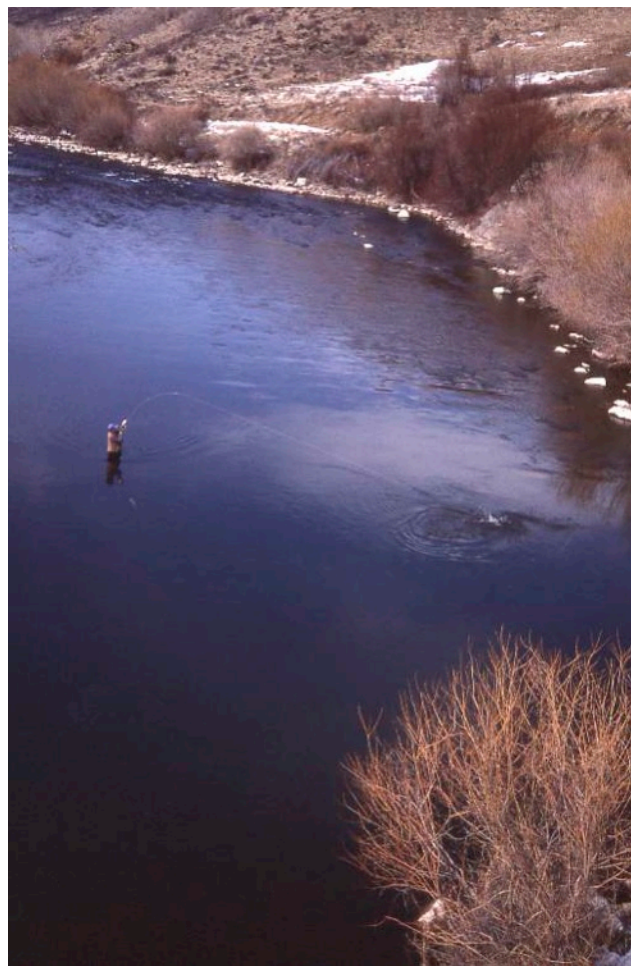
This trout stomach sample shows that it was feeding on more than one type of midge. Proof that midges are a) important, and b) often confusing to know just what the fish are taking.

adults and emergers on the water's surface or pupae just below the surface, you'd better catch a sample of the natural and match its length with your flies. But the deep pupa or larva imitation isn't normally about hatches. When I fish a deep midge pupa-fly, it's normally to fool very cautious trout that keep turning away from anything larger. I remember the jaded trout holding down in plain view in a small spring where the footpath from the parking lot first met the river. Those trout were watched and tempted all day every day. I tried a lot of nymphs only to see them drift to the side to let my flies pass...until I tried a size-20 pupa pattern as a dropper... With no hatch, a size 18 or 20 pattern apparently looks just fine, judging by my results. Difficult trout can be pushovers for little stuff even if it's not the *littlest* stuff. They just don't seem to suspect it.

A real midge hatch is the height of fishing fine. You select your fish, watch him work, time his rises, cast upstream with slack to allow a long natural drift of the fly. But it's not always about working a specific fish. I've seen midge hatches bring trout up in clusters to pick steadily at the drift. The trick then was to work

upstream through the fish, hooking the lowest ones and guiding them quickly downstream before they spooked many of the feeders above them. The rising of trout is a powerful lure for the fly fisher, and a real midge hatch can be as good as that gets.

I can't imagine tippet heavier than 6X for midge flies of size 20 and with really tough trout in very clear water I'll go to 7X and, on occasion, 8X. I've seen 8X make the difference. But on most midge waters and flies average midge size, 6X and 7X are all you'll need.



My experience with midges has mostly been on tailwater rivers in Washington, Oregon, and Colorado. Midges hatch in spring creeks and freestone rivers fed right off the surface, and I fish many such rivers, but for some reason not often during midge hatches.

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Actually, the controlled volumes of tailwaters tend to collect the silt midges love. That may explain my experience in part. Spring creeks with their reliable flows tend to be silty too, however, and slower freestone rivers can be silty. Anyway, whatever the reason, it's been largely midges and tailwaters for me.

Low tailwaters, to be precise. I don't recall fishing a midge hatch on a river above its normal height, and usually well below it. So I asked my fellow *HookedNow* contributor and old friend Rick Hafele if midges prefer lower water for their hatching and he said: *Never say never, when it comes to bug behavior, so no, I wouldn't say that midges never hatch when the water is high. But, all things being equal, conditions for hatches and fishing will be much more favorable during low water than high. In the winter high water often means colder water (not always though - never say never, remember), which will put at least a temporary hold on hatches in general, including midges. Trout will also be in a less active mood when the water is up.*



Midge adults come in many sizes and colors, though in terms of size you can usually count on them being small to smaller!

Midwinter midges tend to come off when the river has warmed to its maximum, which is normally early afternoon. As winter's cold slackens into early spring, midges may come off later. Many times in the off-season I've caught trout well through a midday

blue-winged olive hatch, then switched to midge-flies as the hatch changed over to midges, sometimes right up until dark. But midges aren't big on rules; they tend to hatch whenever they want. The off-season may be their most important period of the year, but they can appear and focus the trout in any month.

It's the subtlety of midge hatches that may appeal to me most, the quietly nosing trout amid the abundance of naturals, the lazy water--this is almost the antithesis of fishing the salmonfly stonefly hatch (which, in it's way, is just as satisfying as fishing midge hatches--thank God for variety!)

As with mayfly hatches, I go heavily to emergers and suspended nymphs during midge hatches. It's a fact of life that under most circumstances, a trout will catch more emergers than fully hatched adults. That's because the emerging insect is struggling to throw off its straightjacket shuck while the adult may fly off at any moment. The half-submerged emerging insect is also easier to see in the drift below the mirrored underside of a river's surface than a midge adult standing atop that mirror. Consequently, crumpled midges that fail their hatching, drifting awash in the surface also appeal to trout.

So I offer you one midge-pupa pattern, one midge-emerger pattern, and a cripple--all solid imitations.

For the pupa, the Disco Midge, Red (which is also commonly tied in pearl, olive, and, oddly, blue). It's a bright and simple midge pattern with a strong track record. You don't particularly want a heavier bead-head fly for a suspended pupa imitation; it won't hold near the surface on a tippet greased with floatant. Of course if you want to fish the pupa off a foot or less of tippet tied to the bend of a larger dry fly, a bead head is fine. Personally, I think that with angler-wise midge-sipping trout, the greased tippet is the way to go. They seem to eye the nearby dry fly with

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suspicion. This all depends, of course, on how cagey your trout are. But easily managed trout can grow wiser during midge hatches...

For the emerging midge, the good old Serendipity. It works.

For the cripple, Smith's Black Cripple. Intriguing wings of CDC offer stubborn buoyancy.

(All three of these flies are--to my complete surprise!--among the hundreds in my book *Trout Flies for Rivers, Patterns From the West That Work Everywhere*. Not that I'm suggesting you purchase the book, you understand...)



DISCO MIDGE, RED (FAR LEFT)

Hook: Standard or light wire, humped shank, sizes 22 to 18.

Thread: Red 8/0.

Abdomen: Red Krystal Flash or Accent Flash over a layer of the red working thread.

Thorax: Peacock herl (or hare's mask dubbing or black thread).

SERENDIPITY, GRAY (MIDDLE)

Hook: Light wire, humped shank (pupa/emergent hook), sizes 22 to 14.

Thread: Gray 8/0.

Body: Gray Z-lon or Antron yarn, twisted.

Head and Wing-Case: Deer hair.

SMITH'S BLACK CRIPPLE (FAR RIGHT)

Todd Smith

Hook: Light wire, humped shank (pupa/emergent hook), sizes 24 to 18.

Thread: Black 8/0.

Shuck: One strand of Root Beer (light-brown) Krystal Flash.

Abdomen: Black Krystal Flash.

Wings: White CDC. Hold a feather by its tip, stroke the fibers down the sides of the stem, bind the trimmed and stroked feather atop the shank as a wing, trim off the tip of the feather. Make two such wings, parted.

Hackle: Grizzly, spiraled over the thorax and trimmed flat underneath.

Thorax: Fine black natural or synthetic dubbing.

Comments: Though it's normally tied tiny to imitate an individual hatching midge, Smith's Black Cripple suggests a tangled clump of midges when tied on larger hooks.

Video Clips

Watch Skip discuss his favorite midge patterns: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH9TqaPkLEs>

And Skip on rigging for midge fishing: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IF2VRGyDLQ>

RICK HAFELE - GLOSSOSOMA, THE LITTLE CADDIS THAT CAN



Picking a favorite anything always presents problems. Just because it was special one year doesn't mean it will produce the same results the next. Plus, picking just one, automatically means you left something else out. Dave covered *Skwala*, or brown willow stoneflies, an excellent choice to be prepared

to imitate on the many trout streams where these stoneflies thrive. Skip discussed midges, a universally important hatch on streams during this period of the year. So what's left? Blue-winged olives (BWOs) for one. In many cases they will be the most common and important hatch you will see in February and March. But they have been written about almost as often as trout eat them. There's another insect, a caddis, which occurs throughout North America and produces excellent hatches and trout feeding activity, but flies under the backcast of most anglers. When it's coming off it is one of my favorites too. It is the saddle-case caddis, a little caddis that belongs to the family

Glossosomatidae. Though small in size this family includes six different genera and about 80 species in North America.

Two genera, *Agapetus* and *Glossosoma*, account for over half the total species in the family, and while *Glossosoma* species produce the most important hatches for anglers across the continent, species of *Agapetus* are just as widespread, just much smaller and therefore more likely to go unnoticed.

With over 50 species spread across all regions of the country, it shouldn't be a surprise that these little guys get called a lot of different names by fly fishers, including: saddle-case caddis, igloo-case caddis, tiny black short-horned sedge, little brown short-horned sedge and little tan short-horned sedge. Excellent photos of all the different stages of the major genera can be found in Thomas Ames Jr.'s impressive book, *Caddisflies - A Guide to Eastern Species for Anglers and Naturalists*.

Given the large number of species, these little caddis express a range of colors and sizes, and even entomologists are challenged to distinguish specific species. The angler is best served by learning to recognize the family and then adjusting pattern size and color as needed. To that end here are some key features shared by all members of Glossosomatidae.

Larva:

- Case made of small gravel creating a dome or igloo like shape that completely covers the larva so that no head or legs are exposed. Cases range from 1/8 to 3/8 inch across.
- The underside of the case includes short strap or "saddle" of silk across the middle of the larva. This strap helps anchor the larva inside the case, and gives the family one of their principle common names, saddle-case caddis.



Saddle-case caddis larvae live under their domed shaped cases. While hidden most of the time, they can drift in large numbers during molts.

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- Inside the case, larva tend to be pale dirty yellow to almost white in color. The head and first thoracic segment are dark brown to black.
- Anal prolegs are short and partially attached to abdomen.
- Overall length of mature larvae ranges from 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch and imitated with patterns sized 16 to 22 (some less common species much smaller).

Pupa:

- Develop under domed case sealed inside a thin silk cocoon.
- Size and color similar to mature larva.
- Head, thorax, and wing cases light brown to black
- Well developed hind legs used for swimming

Adult

- 1/8 to 1/4 inch long (size 16 to 22).
- Wings dark charcoal gray to dirty gray, sometimes with light spots.
- Body dark brown to dark gray.
- Antennae shorter than body.



Saddle-case caddis pupa showing the typical pale color. The dark wingpads indicate this pupa is mature and close to emerging.

These caddis are referred to as the *mountain caddisflies* by Herbert Ross, one of the worlds foremost authorities on caddisflies, due to their preferred habitat: small to medium sized mountain streams. They are not restricted to smaller streams, however, as many large rivers also have excellent populations. They do prefer cooler streams and generally occur in medium to fast water reaches. A few species have adapted to warm waters. Because they prefer cool mountain streams the majority of species occur in the Rocky Mountains from Canada south to the



The small adults are most often seen running around on shoreline grasses.



Cobble and small boulders in moderate to fast water give these caddis the moniker the mountain caddisflies.



A cluster of saddle-case caddis larvae ready to pupate sit on the side of a small boulder in a quick run.

southwestern states, and west to the Pacific coast. Only a few species live in midwestern and eastern streams, but the species that do occur there can be quite abundant and just as important as their more diverse western cousins.

Larvae feed by scraping diatoms off the exposed surfaces of submerged stones. They move about protected under their domed cases leaving small bare feeding tracks across the rocks showing where they have removed the thin layer of diatoms and algae. As they grow larvae molt five times and with each molt they must replace their case with a new larger one. For most caddis larvae this is not a hazardous process, as they make their small case larger by adding on to it. But saddle-case caddis must start from scratch each time they need a larger case. As a result the larvae are exposed and unprotected for a time and many end up drifting in the current. Gary LaFontaine in his book *Caddisflies*, suggests the molts and resulting drift behavior often happens en masse creating significant feeding by trout on the little larvae. I have no idea how to determine when such drift activity occurs short of putting a net in the current to collect them; a level of effort that's unpractical for most fishing situations. The bottom line message is this: saddle-case caddis larvae

can be important to imitate when drifting in large numbers so carry some small nymph patterns to match them. LaFontaine recommends that where saddle-case caddis are abundant, the larval drift is common and important enough that small imitative nymph patterns are effective searching flies worth trying whenever you are nymph fishing.

Mature larvae begin pupation by first tightly securing their case to the rock surface with silk thread. Then inside the case they spin a brown silk cocoon within which they molt into pupa. Here the pupae remain hidden for up to four weeks while they develop. Larvae often congregate together on specific stones before latching down their cases to pupate, so it is not uncommon to pick up a bowling ball sized rock from a riffle and find dozens of little cases clustered together. When I find such clusters I often pull off two or three and open them to see their size and color and how mature the pupae are inside. A typical fully developed pupa runs a size 16 to 20 with a pale yellowish pink to very light tan abdomen, a tan abdomen and head, and brownish-black wingpads. When I find mature pupae my heart rate immediately jumps and I check my caddis fly box to make sure I have some little pupa patterns to match, for when an



The current seems below this riffle are the perfect place to find pupae swimming up to the surface, or later in the day, adults diving below the surface to lay their eggs.

HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

emergence occurs trout can't resist them and I know I'll be in for some great fishing.

Saddle-case caddis pupae are vigorous swimmers. When they leave their protective cases on the bottom of medium to fast riffles, they kick their way to the surface using their hind legs creating a rapid jerky swimming action. Sometimes the pupae swim towards rocky shorelines where they crawl out just above the waterline to emerge into adults. Once while standing in a riffle fishing my legs apparently looked like a suitable rock, for when I looked down dozens of little pupae were crawling up my waders to hatch. Other times pupae simply swim up to the surface and adults emerge in the surface film. In either case the swimming pupae are prime targets for feeding fish. The exact timing of emergence activity is difficult to predict and can occur anytime from mid morning to late afternoon - say 9 or 10 AM to 5 or 6 PM - depending on the weather, water temp, time of year, and specific species emerging. Whenever you notice

clustered cases on the rocks watch the water carefully throughout the day for hatch activity.

Once emerged the adults also produce some great fishing. Adults are similar in size to their pupae - size 16-20 with some species much smaller. Their dark brown to charcoal gray wings may or may not be flecked with light gold markings. Their small size and fast water from which they emerge make them very hard to see on the water. I see adults most often running quickly, and seemingly randomly, over grass stems and branches of shrubs along the bank.

Fish take adults when they first pop out on the surface. Adults at times run across the surface towards shore rather than make quick takeoffs from the surface. This can entice trout to no end. Then, after spending a few days on shore mating, the females return to the water to lay eggs. For this they don't just drop to the surface, but actually dive below the surface and swim to the bottom to lay eggs. Again this generally occurs in choppy water, so you will be unlikely to see clearly what's going on. In general if you see lots of adults



*A pair of mating
Glossosoma adults are
dwarfed by a salmonfly.
On more than one
occasion I've had trout
ignore the large
salmonfly, but readily
take a little caddis dry.
Why? I have no idea!*

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around shore then be prepared to match them with dries on the surface or with diving adult patterns below it. Here's how Thomas Ames Jr. describes the situation during egg laying in his book *Caddisflies*:

There is clearly some trial and error involved in deciding how to present a fly when short-horned sedges are laying their eggs. Some fish will take them as they come to rest on the surface. Others wait until the fly sinks underneath. Still others want a moving fly.

Ames' description captures the challenges of presentation for this little caddis. When fishing adults I typically start with a dry fly on the surface. I dead drift it the first half of the cast, then let it swing with some action the last half. If that fails I put on a small split shot and sink the fly below surface. I might also change flies to a diving adult pattern. Cast up and across so the fly has time to sink then let it swing up towards the surface as it drifts downstream. Watch the surface for signs of rising fish and any clues as to where or how they may be feeding. Egg laying activity generally occurs in the late afternoon to early evening.

This little caddis isn't important just during late winter/early spring. Because most streams, especially western streams, have multiple species in them hatches start as early as mid February and continue well into June. Another flurry of activity typically occurs in the fall starting in September and continuing until mid November.

This is one caddis you will have plenty of chances to match, and lots of fun once you figure it out. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, many anglers completely miss this hatch. First, the larvae only show themselves as a little dome of small gravel stuck to a rock. If you don't recognize this for what it is you won't suspect it's anything important. Second, pupae are very small. A size 16 is a monster and most will be 18's or 20's and even smaller. So again unless you look closely and know what to look for you won't notice them. Third, the hatch occurs in riffles where

little pupae and adults are even harder to see on the surface. And finally many anglers just aren't aware how important these little caddis can be. To determine their importance in your streams look for these two clues: One, the clustered cases of larvae or pupae on cobble sized rocks in riffles. Look for them by simply

SADDLE-CASE CADDIS NYMPH (Rick Hafele)



Hook: 1X short scud hook, size 16-18

Thread: Tan 8/0

Head: Black bead-head

Body: Medium V-rib - shrimp

Thorax & Legs: Light to dark-brown dubbing

SADDLE-CASE CADDIS PUPA (Rick Hafele)



Hook: 1X short scud hook, size 16-18

Thread: Tan 8/0

Head: Black bead-head

Rib: Fine gold wire

Body: dirty white to pale yellow dubbing

Thorax & Legs: Dark gray CDC fibers wrapped in as hackle and trimmed on top.

HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

picking up a few rocks from a riffle. When you find them pull off some cases to determine if there are mature pupae inside. Second, look for the little dark gray adults running around on shoreline grasses and shrubs. When abundant remember that sometime during the day pupae are swimming to the surface and

females are returning to lay eggs. If no feeding fish can be seen put on a pupa pattern and fish it close to the bottom with a nymph rig through choppy riffles. If you do see fish feeding, fish the pupa pattern near the surface or use an adult pattern on or beneath the surface.

DIVING CADDIS (Rick Hafele)



Hook: Dry fly hook, size 16-20
Thread: Brown 8/0
Body: Dark brown dubbing
Wing: White Z-lon

ADULT SADDLE-CASE CADDIS (Rick Hafele)



Hook: Dry fly hook, size 16-20
Thread: Brown 8/0
Body: Medium to dark brown dubbing
Wing: Dark gray CDC tips tied over back

Rick on video!

Watch Rick tie the saddle-case caddis pupa: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJHaLqEZah0>